

U.S. Senior Open Championship

Tuesday, June 21, 2022

Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, USA

Saucon Valley C.C. (Old Course)

Jim Furyk

Press Conference

THE MODERATOR: I'd like to welcome Jim Furyk, our 2021 U.S. Senior Open champion and 2003 U.S. Open champion. Nice little double there.

We've talked about history. What are your thoughts about that historic group of golfers that you're now part of?

JIM FURYK: It's an honor. It's humbling. You mentioned the names that were able to win both the U.S. Open and the U.S. Senior Open, and I'm blessed to be named in that group. So excited. It was real nice to come out last year.

Probably the U.S. Open was the one I had the most opportunities to win, as far as major championships. I definitely had some heartbreak, but the '03 win was the highlight of my career. Then to come out and in my first U.S. Senior Open to be able to win the golf tournament was a lot of fun.

A lot of great memories from Omaha. One of the things about winning an event like this is you don't come back to the same golf course, but to be coming back to Pennsylvania, my home state, only a couple hours from where I grew up, is a lot of fun.

I heard so much about Saucon Valley growing up but never had been here, so kind of a great place for me to be able to come and defend.

Q. Do you expect a lot of family members or folks that you grew up with to come make the trip this week?

JIM FURYK: My mom and dad are here this week and Tabitha, Tanner. Caleigh was here. She went home for some work. I definitely have some friends coming up from Lancaster and from around the state. So it's kind of exciting to see some folks.

I mentioned at media day you can look at it a couple different ways. Probably I put plenty of pressure on myself and try too hard most of the time anyway, so I'll try not to --



really trying to play well at home sometimes can be difficult.

I did it in Jacksonville for THE PLAYERS and Philadelphia and never had a lot of success there.

You can look at it two ways. You can really enjoy the support and the love and being in your home state, or you can put too much pressure on yourself and have it go the other way. So I'll probably try to really enjoy the week and have some fun with it.

I'll probably see some faces in the crowd that I don't get an opportunity to see that often.

Q. Having never played this course competitively before, having had a chance to play in May and then today, do you feel better about how the course suits you or doesn't suit you?

JIM FURYK: Yeah, there's a lot to learn out there. The fairways are -- I think it's set up well. The fairways are generous, but if you do miss them, the rough is very long and thick. You're not going to have a lot of success missing fairways, so it's going to feel like a U.S. Open.

The defense, the greens are -- I mean, Brookline was severe last week, and these really are no easier, no less. There's a lot of slope on them. There's some big, massive greens like 16.

Man, I think the USGA is going to be hard pressed to find four pin locations on that hole, to be honest with you. They're going to have to double up on one, I'm guessing, or have one really difficult pin in there.

But just go out there, if you want a short walk, you walk 16, 17, 18, look at those three greens, and they're very, very severe. So it's going to be difficult for us -- even if you're hitting fairways, it's going to be difficult to put irons in places where you can play from. It's going to be difficult to two-putt in a lot of situations.

I think you're going to see some guys hitting putts where a first putt doesn't get to within eight or ten feet of the hole. Folks on TV may watch and think, what in the heck is going on? But if you saw the severity of these greens, it's pretty understandable.



Q. Pretty good sized crowds out there yesterday and today, even with the practice round. The support, have you noticed it? I heard a couple of shouts of your name.

JIM FURYK: Yeah, it's fun. It really picked up today. I was out in the morning yesterday and probably missed some of the crowd, but today it really started to pick up. A lot of fun.

I think you look at the field and you look at the guys here, and there's just a lot of names that have won major championships and big events. I've enjoyed making the Champions Tour home and playing against some great players who I played against my whole career.

Q. You talked last month about your hitting off the tee. You weren't really pleased with that. The last three weeks have you seen any improvement?

JIM FURYK: It's getting better. Des Moines wasn't real pretty. Madison got a little better. I definitely drove the ball, not the way I wanted to at the U.S. Open last week, but it got better, so I feel like I've seen some improvement.

Kind of hit or miss this week in practice rounds. I've had some good streaks where I've driven it really well and I've had a few holes where I haven't.

I've been working hard on it and I feel like I'm making some headway. But definitely you can jump off the cliff and you get to the bottom a lot quicker than you can climb back up to the top, but right now I'm working on that climb.

Q. You also mentioned some of the long par-4s here, especially on the front side. What is it about No. 2 that's played so tough here in previous Senior Opens?

JIM FURYK: Not only is it long, but it also has an extremely sloping right-to-left fairway. If you do try to get aggressive, if it's downwind and you've got driver, maybe I can get it up there with a 6- or a 7-iron in my hand.

But at that point, the fairway is sloped, cambered real hard right to left, and it's very difficult to keep that ball from running into the left rough.

If it's playing long into the wind you don't get as much of the camber, but, heck, I might hit a 5-wood or a 4-iron in there, too. So it's a long hole. The front of the green is kind of your easier pin where everything kind of bowls to it and you can chip from the front of the green pretty easy.

But that back left and back right pin placements are

extremely difficult. So it really kind of plays like a short par-5, to be honest with you. In fact, I would venture to guess there's a couple par-4s out here, because of the severity of the green -- and that would be one of them -- that in one day that might have been a par-5, because it looks like a par-5 green on a long par-4, if that makes sense.

Q. Last week at The Country Club you shot 4-over, one shot off the cut. Were you kind of nervous about making -- I know you didn't necessarily want -- you'd liked to have played four rounds, but when you only played two, was that good to at least give you some rest for this week?

JIM FURYK: I would have much, much, much preferred to play. You learn so much more in tournament golf and about your game. I'm not that old that I can't walk two more rounds of golf.

I would have loved to have made the cut. I felt like when I finished 4-over was going to make it. I got down to T-60 at one time and reverted back, but the weather changed.

When I finished it was just about to spit a little bit. Once that teeny bit of rain went through, the wind laid down, and the scores got a lot better in the afternoon. I was disappointed, but really there's not much more I could have done on Friday in my round.

I had a putt on 7 that just kind of crawled over the left edge.

Birdied 8.

Made a nice up and down on 9.

There's not really much more I could have done in my Friday round, but I put myself behind the eight ball. I was 3-over through 3, and I think 3-over through 5 on Thursday. Then it was a fight the rest of the day. It was kind of a fight.

I kind of ground it out and held myself in and gave myself a chance with that 74, but that's the round that really got me.

Q. Was your Friday round encouraging enough to give you some confidence going into this week?

JIM FURYK: Yeah, I felt good about it. Conditions were tough. I definitely played in the -- I definitely got the bad end of the tee times last week. Thursday in the afternoon it picked up a lot more and the scores were higher, but to go out there on Friday and shoot 70 and play a good solid round of golf, hit a lot of good shots, good recoveries, putted real well last week.

So there's a lot of positive I pulled from it.

As I said, I drove the ball a lot better as well. On Thursday I didn't drive the ball as well as I needed to in a U.S. Open, and that kind of jumped up and bit me a little bit. That's the over-par you saw.

Q. Just to follow up, does the mental side of having to go through a U.S. Open the week before this, does that get you mentally prepared or sharpen you for what you're going to go through this week?

JIM FURYK: I've been a little worried just about energy and making sure I didn't wear myself out this week, but it's a little of both. The U.S. Open kind of takes a lot out of you both mentally and physically because it is so demanding, but then to go ahead and play two of those in a row, there is some like, okay, I need to recharge a little bit.

But that being said, the conditions last week, the heavy rough, the narrow fairways, the difficult course with the extremely severe greens, that's all really good preparation coming into this week.

This one's not going to sneak up on me, put it that way. I already went through it last week, so it's just a matter of having my game in good shape and playing well.

Q. Talking about the prep last week helping for this week, could you maybe say is it more physically taxing or mentally taxing to do the back to back?

JIM FURYK: Probably mentally. Brookline is a pretty good walk. The back nine here is maybe a bit of a good walk in spots, but it's more -- I think the U.S. Open you never get an opportunity to kind of take a breather or have a hole where you -- you know, kind of an easy hole where you put it in the fairway and a wedge and make a birdie.

You always feel in the U.S. Open if you put your guard down for a split second you can make a bogey.

I think it's more mentally taxing than anything else. Maybe with the two rounds last week I definitely had a chance to recharge on that side of things. I know that I don't want to play three U.S. Opens in a row, put it that way. Two is plenty.

Q. You've earned a reputation on the PGA TOUR as a grinder. Is that why you've played so well in tournaments like the U.S. Open and your first Senior Open?

JIM FURYK: I've shot some of my highest scores in U.S.

Opens as well, but I think when I'm playing well this style of golf lends itself to my game. You know, hitting fairways, putting the ball in good positions with iron play, short game, getting the ball up and down.

U.S. Opens are held on kind of old, historic golf courses for the most part, Winged Foot and Pebble Beach and a place like Saucon Valley. I grew up in the Northeast playing courses like that. It feels comfortable -- I'm at home when I'm playing the U.S. Open.

If grinding it out and making pars and shooting even-par is a good score, I'm very comfortable with that. If we have to go and shoot 25-under like in Las Vegas, I'm comfortable flipping the switch and trying to get more aggressive as well.

I'm just trying -- in an event like this, if we get some rain, if the greens soften up, then you kind of have to -- you go in with a game plan of an idea of what you think might win score-wise, and all of a sudden, you have to change on the fly. That's where it may get tricky. You have to get a little aggressive.

It happened last year in Omaha where we kind of got some rain, and I was able to go out and shoot a couple of good scores when the course was soft on Friday and Saturday.

Q. You played with Duval today. You ever rib him about, hey, I shot 58 to your 59?

JIM FURYK: He still thinks his round is better because it was 13-under and mine was only 12, so we're kind of at a nice standstill. We played a lot of golf together growing up, and when we were on the Korn Ferry and young on the PGA TOUR we played a ton of practice rounds together.

It's nice to have him out on the Champions Tour, and we actually get together and play a lot of rounds together now.

Q. Ernie Els earlier talked about concerns about this tour and its future based on what's going on in the world of golf. Do you have any similar concerns?

JIM FURYK: Of course. Of course I do. I have concerns about what's going on in the PGA TOUR. That's where I played my career, made my living. That's where my heart is. So I have concerns.

Then yeah, also, kind of a trickle-down effect. How does that affect us from PGA TOUR Champions and the over-50 crowd? I feel like we're in a really good place right now. Just go down the list every week on the Champions Tour, and guys like Ernie and so many Hall of Famers that are playing. We get a lot of fanfare and we get a lot of folks

showing up watching the events. We get two days of Pro-Ams. The sponsors are really happy with the entertainment value they get for their clients.

Yeah, I wonder. There's got to be someone a little smarter than me who will tell you how that will trickle down and affect us, but in a minimal way, if that makes sense. I really enjoy the TOUR and playing out there and hope that that effect is not really strong.

FastScripts by ASAP Sports

